STUDY 6

FAITH WORKS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

JAMES 4:1-12

Last week we saw how faith in Jesus should bring about genuine change - a change of heart that should impact every area of life including our words. This week James focuses on how the gospel will change the way we live in community...

THE DANGER OF BEING A FRIEND OF THE WORLD

Read James 4:1-12

1. What seems to be happening in the church James is addressing? (v1-2) Are you surprised by that?

2. What's causing these fights, quarrels and killings, according to James? (see also 3:14-16)

Is this true of your own experiences?

3. What's James' solution to their fighting and the deeper problem of their misplaced desires? Why isn't this working for the readers?

Though James doesn't explicitly explain what fights are happening in the church, he's clear about what motivates them. They're a symptom of a much bigger underlying problem. Just as the mouth demonstrates the state of our hearts (as we saw last week), so too do our actions. Their hearts are divided. They're double minded: still living as if they belong to this world - chasing the same desires others in the world are after - instead of being changed by their faith, and living for God. It's this deeper conflict James addresses next... 4. What's "friendship with the world"? What damage does it cause?

5. Is James calling us to physically separate ourselves from the world, or does he have something else in mind here? [see bible passages in the *sidebar*]

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

John 17:14-18

¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world-the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. $^{\mbox{\tiny 17}}$ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

6. Isn't jealousy a bad thing? What does it mean that 'God is jealous'? How does that affect us?

7. How does pride get in the way of responding to God appropriately? Why does God value humility? (v6-10)

8. In the final two verses, James returns to the problem of the law. It seems some people are using the Old Testament law as a measuring stick to judge how others in the church are living. But James puts that thinking into perspective, saying it's arrogant to judge others by the law when you yourselves can't live up to everything it says. Jesus is the only one who will judge and save (v12). This honest appraisal of who we are will bring humility, not only before God, but also toward those around us. How does humility before God affect the way they are to treat one another?

9. Think honestly about the last time you had a fight or were critical of someone (eg. with your partner, workmates, friends, person from church). What was the cause of it? What did it reveal about what you treasure/desire?

10. What makes humility hard for you? To grow in humility, what things do you need to reevaluate about yourself? What things do you need to be reminded of about God?

Spend time praying about how you might live in the world without "friendship with the world". Ask God that you not be double-minded. Ask instead for humility before God and a willingness to listen to him and love our brothers and sisters in Christ.